IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE, ANDHRA PRADESH
AT HYDERABAD

(Special Original Jurisdiction)

THURSDAY, THE SEVENTH DAY OF JULY

TWO THOUSAND AND FIVE

PRESENT

THE HON'BLE MR JUSTICE V.V.S.RAO

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WRIT PETITION No.9843 of 2004

Between:

Vellamsetty Balaram, S/o.Venkateswara Rao, 20 years,

Telaga, Buddaiahgari Street, Mangalagiri (P.O),

Guntur District.

..... PETITIONER

AND

1 The Inspector of Police, Mangalagiri P.O., Guntur District.
2 The Superintendent of Police, Guntur.

.....RESPONDENTS

Petition under Article 226 of the Constitution of India praying that in the circumstances stated in the Affidavit filed herein the High Court may be pleased to issue a writ, order or direction in the nature of writ of Mandamus declaring the action of the respondents in opening the rowdy sheet against the petitioner in Mangalagiri Town P.S., Mangalagiri (P.O) as being illegal, unjust, arbitrary and violative of Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India and the provisions of Police Standing Order 742.

Counsel for the Petitioner: MR.E.V.BHAGIRATHA RAO

Counsel for the Respondents: GP FOR HOME

The Court made the following:

ORDER:

The writ petition is filed seeking a Writ of Mandamus declaring the action of the respondents in opening the rowdy sheet against the petitioner in Mangalagiri Town Police Station, Guntur District as illegal and void.

The petitioner is a resident of Mangalagiri in Guntur District. He was implicated as Accused No.6 in Crime No.120 of 2003 of Mangalagiri Town P.S. which was pending on the file of the Court of Additional Munsif Magistrate, Mangalagiri for committal proceedings. Except this false case, there is no case pending against him. It is his case that the respondent police opened rowdy sheet without any valid reason contrary to Order 742 of A.P. Police Standing Orders.

The Sub Inspector of Police, P.S. Mangalagiri Town, Guntur District filed counter affidavit denying the allegations made in the writ petition. It is stated that the petitioner was frequently involved in criminal activities causing breach of peace and public tranquility and therefore, a rowdy sheet was opened against him in accordance with the provisions of Standing Orders. It is also stated that in view of the fact that the petitioner is continuously indulging in criminal activities, the rowdy sheet cannot be closed.

The questions raised in this writ petition are squarely covered by the judgment of this Court in **S. Satyanarayana v. State of A.P.**. Therefore, the writ petition is disposed of directing the first respondent to consider the request of the petitioner for closing rowdy sheet following the principles laid down in **Satyanarayana**'s case (supra), which are as under.

i. A mere conviction or convictions cannot be thumb rule for opening history sheet or rowdy sheet though history sheet can be opened even without conviction for the limited purpose of watching a person discreetly.

ii. At the time of opening a history sheet or rowdy sheet a competent officer has to apply mind taking into consideration the social background the proceedings in the criminal trial if a person is convicted and all other relevant material before passing orders for opening history sheet or rowdy sheet.

iii. A history sheet/rowdy sheet is retained for the period of two years only unless it is ordered to be closed by the Superintendent of Police earlier than two years. During the initial period of two years, the history sheeter or rowdy sheeter is entitled to request the concerned police officer to close the history sheet or rowdy sheet which has to be considered by the police officer in an objective manner.

iv. While passing orders for retention of history sheet for another year more, the competent Sub-Divisional Police Officer has to take into consideration the various factors, to wit, surveillance reports, the crime history with reference to the breach of peace of society during the preceding year, the social and political background of the person etc. If there is a preponderance of opinion among the surveillance officers that the person did not come up for any adverse notice and leading a blemishless family life it is a strong circumstance to order for closure of the history sheet or rowdy sheet.

v. When an order is passed by the competent police officer for retention of the history sheet by simply endorsing on the report/letter of the S.H.O. a single line order, that by itself cannot be a ground to continue the rowdy sheet.

vi. Any order passed by the Sub-Divisional Police Officer shall have to be supported by reasons. The reasons need not be communicated but to be recorded.

vii. The orders for opening or retention of history sheet/rowdy sheet are passed under the administrative instructions/guidelines. If such an order is challenged, the competent authority has to place the reasons before the Court which justify retention of history sheet/rowdy sheet. Further, it is always better for the Police Officer to record his own reasons for retention/opening of the history sheet/rowdy sheet.

viii. In the event as mentioned in conclusion 4.7 it is always open to the Court of judicial review to direct the Sub-Divisional Police Officer to reconsider his decision and pass appropriate orders. But whatever be the events in the guise of opening/retention of history sheet a person's liberty, right to privacy and other freedoms under Article 19 of the Constitution of India cannot be infringed under any circumstances.

ix. It is to be remembered that any order of the competent police officer which is not supported by reasons is itself unreasonable and arbitrary and can be termed as mala fide in the sense that it is contrary to the purpose for which the Police Officer is authorised under relevant Police Standing Orders. Hence, if the Court comes to the conclusion that the order of the Sub-Divisional Police Officer is contrary to the purpose for which surveillance is authorised, the action shall be set at naught forthwith on the principle that what is unreasonable and unfair is arbitrary and such arbitrary exercise of power amounts to exercising, the power mala fide.

The petitioner is, however, at liberty to approach the first respondent by filing appropriate representation for closing rowdy sheet, if the same is still continued.

The writ petition is, accordingly, disposed of. No costs

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(V.V.S.RAO, J)

07.07.2005

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To

1 The Inspector of Police, Mangalagiri P.O., Guntur District.
2 The Superintendent of Police, Guntur.

3 Two CCs to the Government Pleader for Home, High Court

Buildings, Hyderabad. (OUT)

4 Two CD Copies.